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MRS. BENTLEY'S LESSONS.

A SKETCH OF SUMMER BOARDING.

BY MRS. FROTH.

'Where are you going this summer, Anna?'

'Oh, I am sure I don't know. There's an end put to our pleasant summer tour, now that I have two children, for I am sure I could never travel with such a tribe after me, nurses and all. I found one *enough*, goodness knows. Charles wants to take country board somewhere—near enough for him to come out every night.'

'Then you will go to Rocklandtown, of course.'

'I hate Rocklandtown.'

'So do I; but you know the old addage, 'beggars mustn't be choosers,' and after all Parker's is really a capital place.'

'Parker's! yes, a capital place for gossip and slander—I have always heard that.'

'It is no more of a place for gossip than all boarding-houses are. There are always some who *will talk*, and some who *will listen*, and some who *will repeat*, and of course at a large boarding-house like Parker's you will no doubt come across specimens of each. But there is no reason why *you* should deprive yourself of the conveniences which that farm-house possesses over all of which I have any knowledge.'

'The greatest inducement to me would be your society, for of course you go there. You are a regular fixture, are you not?'

'To be sure we have taken rooms. We always do from year to year, but this summer I do not know but that we shall give them up. I have no young children to keep me there, and I have a great fancy for spending the summer at the sea-shore. In fact I came here to offer you my rooms, for you must know every room in the house has been rented since February. There are plenty who will be glad of them. Mrs. Parker turns scores away every spring. I only want to give you the first choice.'

'You are very kind, Nelly—just like your own dear self to think of me with my noisy little troop. Not a very pleasant exchange to the boarders, I fancy, if they were to take the place of your all but grown up children.'

'You will find plenty of company—it is a regular nursery; and there could not be a safer place for children than that broad, green lawn, with its graveled walks; and back, the meadow land with its orchard trees, and the avenue of althea's that affords such a shaded path even at noonday. I tell you what, Anna, you drive out, and look at the rooms, and if you don't like them don't think of going. Emily Turner is very anxious to get board there, but she does not dream of my giving up my rooms, or she would have been after them long ago.'

Mrs. Bentley began to think that Parker's must be a very desirable place.—That evening the charms with which her friend, Mrs. Haydon, had invested the spot, were portrayed to her husband in the same glowing colors, and resulted in a drive out to Rocklandtown the following morning.

The rooms did indeed seem very inferior and small, but the air of cleanliness about them, and the genial good-humor glowing in the faces of Mr. and Mrs. Parker attracted Mrs. Bentley; and as she stood on the broad, stone piazza that extended across the back of the house, and looked out through the cloister-like arches upon the charming grounds beyond, she made her decision, and forthwith completed her arrangements,

'So you are going to Parker's to board,' said Mrs. Grassdell, the wife of a brother of Mrs. Bentley. 'I am glad of it.—If you are not taught some lessons there, that you need to learn, then I am mistaken.'

'What lessons do you mean, Ellen?'

'Never mind. It is my opinion though, that you will learn something beyond nominative I, possessive my or mine, objective me.'

'What *do* you mean, Ellen? Do you think I am egotistical?'

'Not exactly, but you have lived so exclusively among your friends, and they have so flattered, and petted, and spoiled you, that you know no more of the world than a baby.'

'I do,' answered Mrs. Bentley, the color mounting to her face, 'I know enough about the world. It is only because I prefer imputing good motives to persons instead of bad ones, that makes you think me ignorant!'

'Now answer me honestly, Anna, who is more frequently in the right in the estimate formed of our mutual friends—you or I? If *I* had been deceived as many times as *you* have, I warrant no one would have the opportunity of deceiving me again; but each new face you see you put your trust in, and are fool enough to believe every smooth word spoken to you. *If you don't learn some lessons this summer then I am mistaken.* I only hope and pray that your eyes will be opened to see who your true friends are.'

'I do not want my eyes opened any wider,' said Mrs. Bentley, pettishly. 'I see enough that is disagreeable now.'

After such a conversation, it would have been singular if Mrs. Bentley had not felt some mistrust of the strange faces amongst whom she was soon thrown; but it lasted not long. A slight acquaintance with the 'goodlie companie,' which assembled around the well-filled board, or gathered in the old stone piazza of a morning, or in the large, cool parlor at erentide, convinced her that the grievous lessons her sister-in law had predicted would be postponed for 'that season.—Never since her removal from her Southern home had she been thrown amidst so charming and so congenial a set.

First in her admiration stood Mrs. Nolen, a lady whose brilliant conversational powers engrossed her attention. The ease and affability of her manner was tempered by a certain dignity, which, while it attracted Mrs. Bentley, prevented her from forming the intimacy toward which she felt so much inclination. A Mrs. Moodie, for whom Mrs. Bentley at first felt an aversion, became at length her great favorite; and indeed her sparkling vivacity and very winning ways made her the life of the household. Another great attraction was her exceeding truthfulness of manner. Mrs. Bentley fully appreciated this truth, for she had often been condemned by her own family for her excessive candor. She loved her friends devotedly, never suffering them to be attacked in her presence without defending them to the best of her ability. She told them pleasant things said of them, because it gave her pleasure to do so. Of persons to whom she was indifferent, she was quite as apt to gossip as are the majority of her sex; and those whom she disliked, she disliked with a hearty fervor, until she discovered some redeeming trait in them, and then not unfrequently did her impressible nature cause her to unsay the unkind things that she felt guilty in having said. Her undeveloped and undisciplined character was the occasion of her being often misunderstood, and only in the hearts of those who had known her well and long could she win a lasting place.

One morning, when Mrs. Bentley was in Mrs. Moodie's room, the conversation turned upon Mrs. Nolen.

'I do not know how I have incurred her displeasnre,' said Mrs. Moodie, 'but she has not been in my room this season, and previous summers we have been very intimate. I am sorry, for I admire her exceedingly.'

'Why is she angry with you?' said Mrs Bentley, curious to know particulars. 'I am sure I did not know it. She always speaks of you as though you were on the best terms.'

'Oh, we have had no quarrel—some stories that had got about this spring, and that I thought I had traced to her, but after all I believe Miss Somers is at the root of it. I mentioned them to Mrs. Nolen's sister, and that has been the cause of the coolness, I fancy. Mrs. Nolen is one who would take no pains to defend herself if she was falsely accused.'

'How unlike she is to me. I could never rest until I had confronted my accuser—but if I had her dignity to fall back upon I should be content. I wish I was like her.'

'You need not wish to be. It is all very well in Mrs. Nolen, whose experience of life has been such as to make her so, but I should be sorry to see you artificial.'

'Oh, she is not artificial. It is just as natural for her to be dignified as it is for me to talk and eat in my 'harum scarum' way.'

'You have not known her so long as I have. She was wild and wayward enough before that unfortunate affair of hers.'

'What unfortunate affair?'

'Is it possible that you have not heard of it? Well, I shall not be the one to enlighten you.'

'Now that is really unkind. You know how much curiosity I have, and I shall always be imagining something dreadful until I hear the tale.'

'Indeed I shall not tell you, Miss Somers knows more about it than I do.—Ask her if you want the particulars.'

The next morning Mrs. Bentley joined Miss Somers as she started for a morning walk. The one subject uppermost in her mind she could hardly help referring to, but Miss Somers was busy recounting the story of her troubles with Miss Moodie, who she thought was treating her very cruelly this season.

'I do not think I shall stay here all summer, said Miss Somers, 'it makes it so unpleasant for me. I have almost cried myself sick about it, for Mrs. Moodie and I have always been so intimate.'

'Why don't you tell her that you never said these things? She would surely believe so old and intimate a friend. She knows that she has been mistaken once in her suppositions, and of course she is liable to have made another error. I'll tell her for you.'

'No, no, that wouldn't do. I don't want her to know that I've said anything about it to you. There is always some fuss here. I advise *you* to be careful.—Speaking out what you think, as you do, will very likely be the means of getting you into some scrape before the summer is over.'

'Never fear for me. I like every one in the house too well to quarrel with them.'

'There is one lady in this house that a person of your disposition ought to be careful of. I shall not tell you who it is, but I will put you on your guard. She is 'all things to all men,' and if I am not mistaken you have already formed a very incorrect estimate of her character. She is a very dangerous,' inconsistent woman.'

'Why, Miss Somers, do you know what you are doing? You are saying that which will by turns make me suspicious of every lady in the house, for I should never find out who it was. Now that you have told me so much you ought to, in justice to me, and to the other ladies, let me know which one it is. I am sure it is very kind in you to take such an interest in me, and I appreciate your kindness. You need not be afraid of my making an improper use of your confidence. Is it that funny-looking lady who came last?—oh, what's her name, she has such restless-looking eyes, and talks so much about her principles? I have not spoken half a dozen words to her.'

'Mrs. Grimshaw you mean—oh, no.—This is the first time I ever saw her, but the lady I refer to I have known for years, and was as much captivated with her once as you are now.'

'Who can it be? not Mrs. Moodie, for she is truth itself; nor those lovely sisters, Mrs. Percival and Mrs. Stanley, for they are the most religiously conscientious people that I ever came across; nor Mrs. Nolen, who would never stoop to anything evil, nor——'

'Stop, stop—you need not go on with the list—Mrs. Nolen is the one, and you can admire her talents and her beauty as much as you choose, but never trust her.'

Mrs. Bentley drew a long breath.—'How very kind of Mrs. Somers,' thought she. 'I never should have distrusted her,' she said, aloud.

'The ladies in the parlor were speaking of you last evening after you went up stairs,' continued Miss Summers, 'and one of them said that she admired your simplicity of manner and your naturalness. "It is an affected simplicity, I imagine," said Mrs. Nolen, 'and her naturalness is nothing but art."'

'Is it possible!' exclaimed Mrs. Bentley, her checks all in a glow. 'How could she think so meanly of me? I'm sure I have always wished to be different, and tried to be, but it was of no use. Many a lesson my sister, Mrs. Grassdell, has read me about my thoughtless, impulsive ways. Ah, Ellen was not so far from right, after all! I think my eyes will be opened this summer, as she said they would be.'

'Mind you don't say a word about it to any one—only watch for yourself.'

'Very well. Oh, Miss Somers, Mrs. Moodie commenced telling me something about Mrs. Nolen's early life, or rather, she made an illusion to some unpleasant occurrence, which, when she found I had not heard of, she would not continue, but told me that you knew more of the particulars than she did. What was it?'

'That happened long ago, and ought not to be revived, for no one can accuse Mrs. Nolen of the least indiscretion since. Mrs. Moodie, on the contrary, is always committing some imprudent act, and she need not talk about Mrs. Nolen.'

'She did not talk about her. I want you to understand me. She positively refused to tell me of the circumstance, to which she had accidentally alluded, and sent me to you for information.'

'It was only an old lore affair, or rather a want of love in an affair she had on hand. Her husband was her first choice, but through the instrumentality of friends she became betrothed to another. Frightened at the near approach of the day fixed upon for the wedding, she retracted her promise, and subsequently married Mr. Nolen. There have been many versions of this affair, but this I know to be the true one.'

'Well, she did *just* right, said Mrs. Bentley. 'If I had known her, I would have upheld her through the whole. I think more of her than ever—to have sufficient independence to break off an alliance so near completion, when her heart was with another. Yet, I wish she had not said that of me, and I am sorry to think her insincere; but perhaps her experience of life may have caused her to appear more so than she really is. I am sure from things I have heard her say, that underneath the cold exterior which she sometimes assumes, that she has a warm heart that throbs right nobly. I was reading a poem to her, not long ago, wherein was narrated some act of heroism, and I saw the tears gather in her eyes, and her lips quiver. Oh, Miss Somers, I am sure you must be wrong.'

'You are welcome to think so, if you choose. I am sure it makes no difference to me,' replied Miss Somers, plainly showing her pique by her tones.

They had retraced their steps, and were now sauntering slowly through the grounds. Mrs. Moodie came toward them, and Miss Somers fell back.

'I know all now,' said Mrs. Bentley.—'It was not all what I expected—but quite romantic, wasn't it? Mrs. Marston ought to hear it—it would furnish her with materials for her next story.'

'Yes, they say that *that* Mrs. Marston writes. Mrs. Percival and Mrs. Stanley have taken a great fancy to her, I must say it is more than I have.'

'She seems clever enough, but nothing remarkable. When do the Cannings arrive?'

'They are expected next week, I think. Ah, here we have come upon Mrs. Marston, botanizing.'

'Not botanizing,' said Mrs. Marston, 'only gathering a few wild flowers, for Willie, who is not well to-day, and he does so dearly love flowers.'

'But the Cannings,' continued Mrs. Bentley, 'do tell me about them. I have heard Mrs. Canning was perfectly beautiful.'

'She is very handsome—do you know her, Mrs. Marston?'

'No—yes—that is, I am not acquainted with her, but I have frequently met her, and we have several mutual friends. I am very anxious to know more of her, for I hear she is a lovely, warm-hearted woman, and such a character I should value more than all the beauty in the world. Combined as they are in her, they must make her very attractive.'

'You will soon have an opportunity of judging for yourself; she is a great favorite of Mrs. Haydon, Mrs. Bentley.'

'Yes, I know that. Isn't Nelly Haydon a lovely creature?'

'Well—yes, I like her very well,' was Mrs. Moodie's disjointed answer. 'She did not want to come here this summer, but her husband engaged the rooms last year, and Mr. Parker would not let them off. She was in a great way when I saw her last, because she could not get them off from her hands, for she was determined not to spend another summer in the same house with Mrs. Whilton and her unruly boy.'

Mrs. Bentley looked amazed. Mrs. Haydon's apparently disinterested motives dawned upon her in a new light.

'Did you ever see that black lace breakfast cap, and faded green silk wrapper of her's? I declare they nearly killed me—but what a shame for me to make fun of so dear a friend of your's. If she only had a little more taste in dress, she would be quite endurable. Of course you would never think of repeating what I have said.

'You are right, Mrs. Moodie. I never should think of repeating it, for I would not have Nelly's feelings so hurt for the world.'

Mrs. Bentley left Mrs. Moodie and Mrs. Marston, and retraced her steps to the house. After that morning's conversation, she did not fraternize quite as well as formerly with Mrs. Moodie. Feeling a little distrust both of her and of Mrs. Nolen, she did not avail herself of the opportunities for enjoying their society; but her acquaintance with the two sisters, Mrs. Percival and Mrs. Stanley, and their friend, Mrs. Marston, increased rapidly, Mrs. Grimshaw also attached herself to this party, and Mrs. Bentley felt conscience-stricken that she could not bring herself to like better one whose good principles were so frequently brought forward as her guide and rule of action.'

The summer days, despite the heat, passed pleasantly away. Beneath the shade of some wide-spreading elm or chestnut, the ladies gathered, and while one read aloud some poem of rare beauty—now Mrs. Browning's, and again our own grand Ida May's—the others bent busily over some dainty bits, of embroidery, or pieces of worsted work, whose brilliant colors contrasted finely with their white morning dresses, and the greensword beneath the green brinches above them.

The evenings, then, what merry times! In lively sallies, in mirthful games, and in bewildering music the hours lost themselves. The Cannings were great favorites, and contributed vastly to the enjoyment of the party. Only poor Mrs. Marston kept aloof. Some unfortunate misunderstanding between herself and Mrs. Canning had effectually alienated them, notwithstanding Mrs. Marston's earnest desire to make her acquaintance. Now and then, through Mrs. Percival's persuations, she would make her appearance in the drawing-room for an evening, but her own sensitive, rather suspicious nature, caused her not unfrequently to fancy slights when none were intended, and consequently these evenings were anything but pleasant to her. Finally, she withdrew herself entirely to her own apartment, and as her room was large and pleasantly furnished, some of the ladies were almost always to be found there during the evening.

Mrs. Stanley, Mrs. Percival, Mrs. Grimshaw and Mrs. Bentley met there on one occasion. Some of the boarders were in the parlor, and others watching the gentlemen in their games in the ten-pin alley.

'How sweetly Mrs. Hunter dresses,' said Mrs. Stanley.

'Um!' said Mrs. Grimshaw. 'It is plain enough to see what she makes so much display for. I advise you to look after your husband, Mrs. Percival.'

'Oh, no danger,' laughed Mrs. Percival. 'Mrs. Hunter is an old friend of mine, and of my husband's, too, I could not trust him in safer keeping.'

'Well, I am opposed to such extravagance in dress, and principled against it, too. Besides, you can't make me believe that she does not flirt. She may be an old friend of the Percivals, but I am sure she knew Mr. Marston before this summer—eh, Mrs. Marston?'

Mrs. Marston colored slightly. 'It never entered my head to ask my husband,' she answered, seemingly embarrassed.

'It is my advice to you to interest yourself a little in the matter. Mrs. Hunter is a dangerous woman,' continued Mrs. Grimshaw.

'I do not see any occasion for interfering with my husband, answered Mrs. Marston, proudly.

'Others may if you do not,' said Mrs. Grimshaw, with emphatic nods of the head.

Mrs. Stanley and Mrs. Percival exchanged glances, and Mrs. Bentley's face was more flushed than Mrs. Marston's.—It required the memory of her sister-in-law's precepts to keep her quiet.

'Oh, I see you don't think there is any occasion for anxiety, but I know better than to excite groundless fears. It is from a sense of duty that I have used my eyes and my ears, too, and I know what is going on,' continued mrs. Grimshaw.

'I must insist upon an explanation,' said Mrs. Marston, with dignity. 'I do not understand such accusations.'

'If I have put you on your guard, that is all that is sufficient, for I am no busybody, telling tales backward and forward for the purpose of making mischief. I considered it to be my duty to say what I have said, but I shall not tell anything more.

Mrs. Bentley, fully aroused, answered, 'I should not take any notice of reports coming in such a way, Mrs. Marston.—For my part, I never believe those fancy statements. If one can tell me what was said, and who said it, it may be worth while to pay some attention,'

'So you mean to convey the idea, Mrs. Bentley, that I have not heard any reports concerning——'

'I mean to convey the idea, that if you had heard any, I should have had a much better opinion of your principles if you had kept them to yourself,' interrupted Mrs. Bentley, her cheeks aglow with the indignation which she felt,

'You are very kind, Mrs. Bentley,' interrupted Mrs. Marston; 'but indeed, I would rather you would not incur Mrs. Grimshaw's displeasure by——'

Mrs. Marston hesitated, and Mrs. Grimshaw finished for her.

'By your interference. I'll give you a piece of advice, Mrs. Bentley—attend to your own affairs, your husband's and your children's, but leave your friends to take care of themselves. You will have quite enough to keep you busy with the first, I imagine, and at any rate, you will never get any thanks from the latter.'

Mrs. Bentley thought little of this speech at the time, but she remembered it afterward.

Mrs. Marston had become a great favorite with Mrs. Bentley, since her distrust of Mrs. Nolen, and she now espoused her cause against Mrs. Grimshaw with valor. She discussed the matter with the other ladies, in eager warmth, without realizing that she was thus giving greater publicity to the disagreeable rumor, and consequently increasing Mrs. Morstow's annoyance.

Not long after this Mrs. Moodie came into Mrs. Bentley's room, and closing the door after her with an air of secrecy, said:

'I have come to ask you a question, Mrs. Bentley—not that I believe you have ever said such a thing, but it will be a satisfaction to hear from your own lips that there was no foundation for the story. Miss Somers tells me that you came to her, and told her that I had given you the whole history of Mrs. Nolen's early life, and in that way threw her off her guard until you had gained your point in ascertaining from her all you wished to know.'

'Oh, Mrs. Moodie, how can people be so wicked? But this is a falsehood that carries its refutation along with it.'

'Of course it does. Miss Somers is too shrewd a peason to be taken in that way. It only confirms the opinion I had already formed of her.'

Mrs. Bentley felt sick at heart. She recalled what Miss Somers had told her of Mrs. Nolen's speech about herself, and she was not long in coming to the conclusion that that also was a falsehood. From that day she sought Mrs. Nolen's society with renewed avidity, and the more she saw of her the better was she convinced she was well worthy of the esteem in which her friends held her.—Mrs. Nolen treated her with exceeding coolness, and both Mrs. Moodie and Mrs. Bentley were led to infer that Miss Somers had told her own story to Mrs. Nolen, but the subject was too delicate a one to admit of any explanation to her, and Mrs. Bentley was therefore obliged to let the matter rest, very much regretting that her curiosity had lost her a friendship from which she had promised herself so much pleasure.

But she had not yet learned to be politic, and she treated Miss Somers with all the scorn that in her opinion she merited. Miss Somers revenged herself by insinuations which were not lost by the ears upon which they fell, and gradually Mrs. Bentley found herself avoided by the ladies. Even Mrs. Marston partook of the general feeling that Mrs. Bentley was curious, intermeddling and a gossip. And about this time another of her *mal apropos* remarks confirmed the unjust opinion in Mrs. Canning's mind.

In conversation with Mrs. Canning, Mrs. Bentley, speaking of the high terms of regard in which she had heard her spoken of by her friends, said, 'I believe they were dissatisfied with your marriage, having expected a more advantageous alliance.' Mrs. Bentley was quite unaware that Mr. Canning's circumstances had been very inferior previous to his marriage, but had supposed that the friends of Mrs. Canning would not have been satisfied with any 'business man,' that their ambition demanded some titled foreigner, or some man high in office in our own country, from what she had heard said. But Mrs. Canning construed it differently, and being very spirited, and very devoted as a wife, she resented the affront which she imagined Mrs. Bentley had put upon her husband. Mr. Canning was in reality a great favorite of Mrs. Bentley's, she feeling particularly attracted towards him as he was from the same New England State; but thereafter her attempts at conversation with either of the two were failures, and as she was ignorant of the cause of offence, she was unable to vindicate herself.

Mrs. Bentley began to feel constantly annoyed by the change in the manner of the ladies toward her, and when she recalled her defence of Mr. Marston, and the subsequent coldness of his wife, and the train of circumstances which had caused Mrs. Nolen to repel her advances toward intimacy, she looked upon herself as an injured woman, and resolved that she would not longer endure the *disagreemens* of her situation.

It was no difficult task to persuade her husband that a few weeks at the sea-shore would be a desirable change, and consequently they made their arrangements for departure.

The requisite city shopping fatigued Mrs. Bentley so much as to bring on a severe attack of nervous headache, which deferred their departure for several days; and during this time the kindness of the ladies well nigh obliterated all her unpleasant feelings. Mrs, Percival's small, fair hand seemed to chase away the pain from her head with its magnetic influence. Mrs. Marston reading in her low, dreamy voice would not unfrequently soothe her into slumber when all other means had failed. All volunteered some assistance, and the result was that when at length the Bentleys took their departure, they left with pleasant feelings toward all excepting Miss. Somers, whose violation of principle had been too flagrant to entirely overlook; and the good little Mrs. Grimshaw, whose principles in the eyes of Mrs. Bentley stuck out like bars of iron in every direction; and toward whom she still reproached herself for feeling badly.

Upon their arrival at the sea-side they joined the Grassdells and their party at the hotel in which they were boarding.—When Mrs, Bentley had last seen her sister-in-law, she had given her a glowing description of the charming society at Parker's, and the delightful summer she was passing there.

Now she felt a little uncomfortable at Mrs. Grassdell's first question, for she detected the lurking smile in her eye.

'Well, how do you like Rocklandtown boarding by this time?'

'Oh, very well,' replied Mrs. Bentley, resolving that she would not give her the satisfaction of hearing of her unpleasant experience.

But Mrs. Bentley was one who was apt to speak of what was uppermost in her mind, and had no tact at concealment, and the result was that one afternoon, when they were conversing alone and sociably, she gave her sister-in-law a full history of the events of the summer.

'And is this all the trouble you have had?' said Mrs Grassdell, with an elongated face. 'Mere moonshine, why from what I had heard I imagined the whole house to have been in an uproar—everything dreadful going on, and you at the bottom of all the fusses?'

'Where did you ever hear anything about it?' said Mrs. Bentley, her face expressing the amazement which she felt.

'Oh, a friend of Mrs. Canning's told me. You have made yourself a name this summer, my lady, whether you deserve it or not; and I am not one whit sorry. I warned you that you would learn some lessons this summer.'

'Well, now, what lessons have I learned? I am sure I don't know. Not to distrust every one certainly, for with the one exception of Miss Somers, I am sure it was more an unfortuitous chain of events that caused the misunderstandings there than anything else.'

'Well, begin at the beginning with me, and I will tell you what lessons your experience ought to have taught you, and if you have not learned them now you never will. In the first place you found that Mrs. Haydon's motives were not so purely disinterested as you imagined them to be. Now next time a friend comes to you in great anxiety to do you a kindness, see what motives of her own she has to serve before you are so eager to accept.'

'I would rather be deceived by false friends a hundred times than to doubt the kind motives of one real one once. Besides, Nellie Haydon probably thought she was doing me a kindness, as well as accommodating herself,' replied Mrs. Bentley.

'There are none so blind as those who will not see,' said Mrs. Grassdell, warmly, 'and positively you provoke me beyond anything. I suppose Miss Somers was doing you a kindness, in your estimation, in telling these abominable stories.'

'No, indeed. I cannot bear Miss Somers, and I was not at all diffident in showing the estimation in which I held her.'

'There! another lesson for you! Such things don't answer, Anna. It was no use to increase her ill-will—you must learn policy, and no matter how much you despise a person, so that you don't let them know the opinion in which you hold them. There is two lessons for you to begin with. Now let me see what next. Why, your curiosity to know the past history of people—you must get over that. It is no matter who nor what people were, nor who their grandfathers and grandmothers were, so that they are agreeable and answer your purpose. You only make them suspicious if you show any interest in their genealogical tree.'

'Well, I am sure I——'

'Don't interrupt me. There's three lessons for you. Now for the fourth.—Mrs. Nolen may or she may not have said what Miss Somers told you that she did. Even if she did say it, you have no right to think less of her for it—she thought so, no doubt. You expect people to think

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